

How To Play
**THE HOHNER
HARMONICA**



New **EASY METHOD**
FOR BEGINNERS
BY SIGMUND SPAETH

35c



THE harmonica is literally a "mouth-organ," as it has often been called, using reeds, as in an accordion or reed organ, and producing tones by the simple process of blowing in or drawing out, guided by a series of holes that follow the familiar pattern of the musical scale.

The great advantage of the harmonica is that anyone at all can immediately draw from it some adequate music "for fun", while it can also prove itself a most effective concert instrument in the hands of an expert. The following pages are concerned chiefly with the elementary harmonica known as the "Marine Band," tuned in the easiest and commonest of all keys, C major. (The same type of harmonica is available in half a dozen other keys, but the C instrument will be

found most satisfactory for a start. It will also be found in tune with any piano of standard pitch, which can be used for accompaniments if desired.)

Practically everybody has the urge to make music of some sort, but too many people suffer from an inferiority complex, thinking that a special talent is required and that a long period of practice must precede any satisfactory performance. To play merely for your own pleasure, perhaps even providing some pleasure for others, is entirely possible without any musical gift or drudgery.

The harmonica is actually a "self-starter" for all those who want the satisfaction of expressing themselves musically in a small way. For those possessing both talent and industry, the harmonica offers unlimited possibilities as a concert instrument. It functions equally well in solos and in groups, combining its pure tones effectively with other instruments and serving also as an excellent accompanist and support for the human voice. Children of almost any age can have fun with a harmonica and adults will find it at least a delightful diversion, with surprising possibilities also for truly aesthetic satisfaction. The harmonica was the only instrument played by Abraham Lincoln and it has been held in similar esteem by President Eisenhower, the late President Coolidge, and many other famous men and women of our time.

The name of Hohner (now 100 years old) stands for the best in both harmonicas and accordions, and anyone using a Hohner instrument can be guaranteed complete satisfaction so far as his or her abilities and ambitions permit. Now go ahead and enjoy yourself by simply following the directions. There is nothing easier in all music.

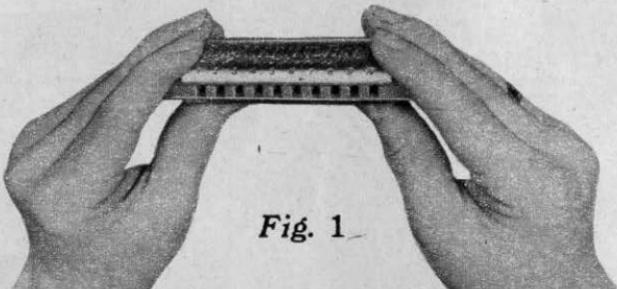


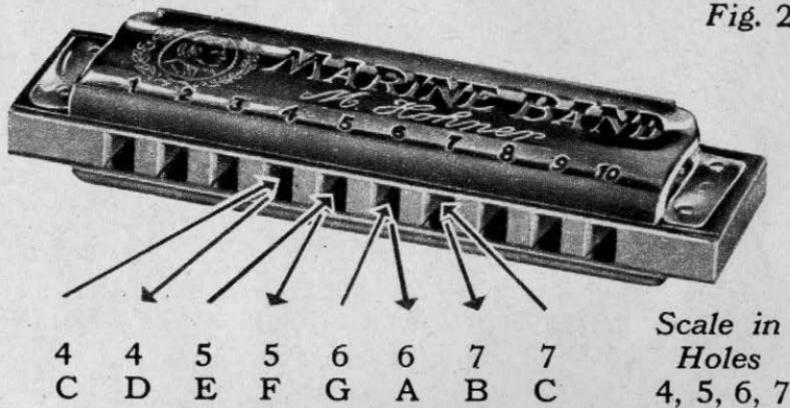
Fig. 1

FIRST STEPS IN PLAYING THE HOHNER HARMONICA

ASSUMING that you have a Marine Band (or any other 10-hole and 20-reed) Hohner Harmonica, preferably tuned in C, first make sure that you are holding it properly (See Fig. 1). The words "Marine Band" and the numbers above the holes should be facing you on top of the instrument, which you raise to your lips with one hand at each end, the forefingers on top and the thumbs underneath, leaving all the holes open. There are ten holes altogether, but for a start you need only the four numbered 4, 5, 6 and 7. With these you can immediately produce a complete scale from C to C (an octave higher), a total of eight notes. You do this by first blowing into hole no. 4 (C) and then breathing out from the same hole (D). Blowing into hole no. 5 gives you E and drawing out your breath from the same hole produces F. Similarly G is sounded by blowing into hole no. 6 and A by drawing out. Then comes B, which you get by drawing out from hole no. 7, and finally the C, an octave above your starting-point, for which you blow *into* the same hole 7. In each case you will hear not only the melody note but a suggestion of harmony, which is not at all unpleasant. The time may come later when you will want to concentrate on producing one clear and beautiful tone at a time, like a violinist; but for the present, to make

everything as easy as possible, just accept and enjoy the fact that you are able immediately to create a combination of melody and harmony. (Many harmonica virtuosos make good use of this individual characteristic even in elaborate solos.)

Fig. 2



Take a look at Figure 2, to make sure you are blowing in and drawing out your breath properly and using the right holes to get the tones you wish. Do not blow hard or use too much breath in either direction. You can produce a pure, sweet musical tone with just the equivalent of normal breathing in and out. Play the scale up and down several times, using the holes from 4 to 7 inclusive, to become accustomed to the sequence of notes. (The relationship of tones is the same regardless of the key). Now you are ready to play your first piece. There are several possibilities, but the easiest is probably the one that children call "HOT CROSS BUNS." Here is how you do it. The arrows indicate whether you are blowing into or drawing out from the hole with which they are connected, and the length of each arrow shows the relative length of the tone produced.*

*This system of harmonica notation was invented by the famous American painter, Thomas Hart Benton, a lifelong enthusiast and an excellent amateur performer, with a Decca record, "Saturday Evening at Tom Benton's," to his credit. He has always played the Hohner harmonica.

Follow this diagram and you will hear the familiar "HOT CROSS BUNS":

HOT CROSS BUNS



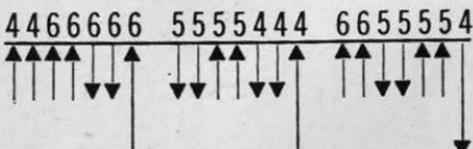
Here is a tune that everybody knows, with just one more note in it than in "HOT CROSS BUNS." It's generally sung as "MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB," but also has the words "Merrily we roll along" when added to "Good night, ladies," which you will be playing later. Here is the diagram of Mary's well known melody:

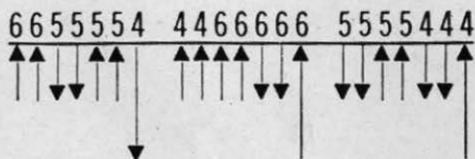
MARY HAD A LITTLE LAMB



Now you can play a piece that has many sets of words and is perhaps best known as the ABC or alphabet song or counting up to seven, followed by "ALL GOOD CHILDREN GO TO HEAVEN." We know it also as "TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR" and "BAA BAA, BLACK SHEEP." This tune, sometimes credited to Mozart, can be diagrammed thus for the harmonica:

A B C





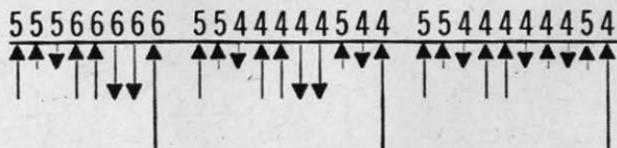
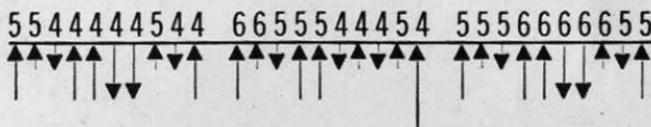
Here is another easy little tune, known all over the world, and ending with those popular words, "MY FAIR LADY." It is generally called LONDON BRIDGE:

LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN



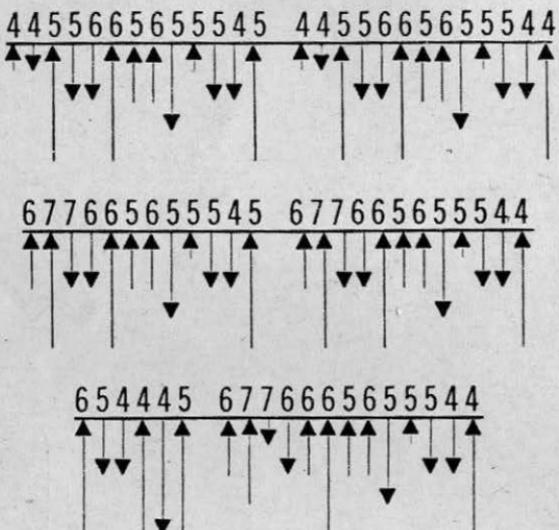
The next piece is generally called "ROUSSEAU'S LULLABY," because it was composed by that famous French philosopher; but we also sing it with such words as "GO TELL AUNT RHODY, the old gray goose is dead." Here is its diagram:

ROUSSEAU'S LULLABY



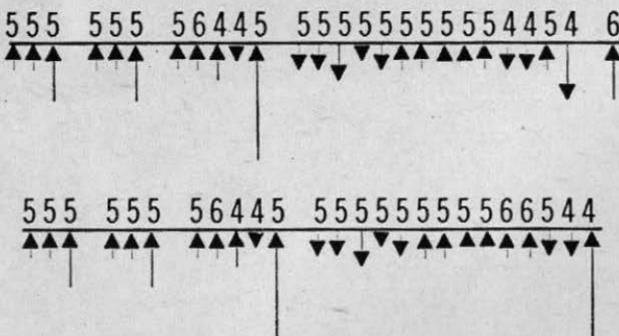
And now one of the great songs of all time, that should be played and sung in every home, with words by John Howard Payne and music by Sir Henry Bishop, "HOME, SWEET HOME" itself:

HOME SWEET HOME



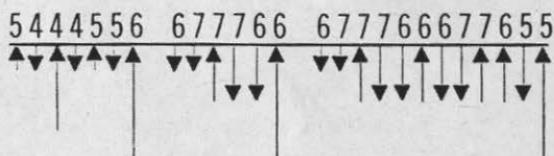
At Christmas (and almost any other time) we like to sing and play "JINGLE BELLS," perhaps clinking with spoons on glasses for the rhythm. So here is that famous tune diagrammed for the harmonica:

JINGLE BELLS

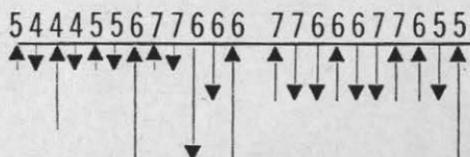


Another Christmas number that can be played on the harmonica within the range of one octave in C is "THE FIRST NOEL":

THE FIRST NOEL

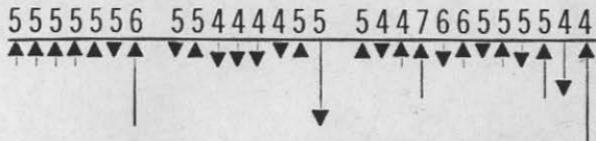


REPEAT ABOVE LINE



You can add "JOY TO THE WORLD" at this point, for Christmas and other occasions. It was written by Handel and it goes right down the scale for a start:

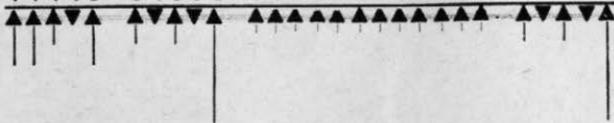
JOY TO THE WORLD



Now let's try one or two rounds, in which other instruments or voices can join. One of the most familiar is "ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT":

ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR BOAT

44445 54556 777666555444 65544



Even more familiar but not quite so easy is "THREE BLIND MICE." Notice that the first six tones are the same as in "HOT CROSS BUNS," but after that it's a little harder. Both of these rounds can be sung or played in 3 or 4 parts.

THREE BLIND MICE

544 544 6555 6555 677767766



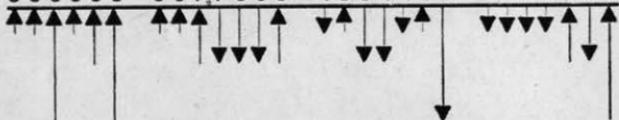
677767766 677767766 5544



Now you can be a bit more ambitious and try the Brahms "ULLABY," which will test your breath control. You know the melody well enough.

BRAHMS' LULLABY

556556 5677666 4554455 4576677



447656 545666 447656 545544



The famous "MARINES' HYMN" is not too difficult for the harmonica. The music was originally composed by Offenbach in his opera, "GENEVIEVE OF BRABANT."

MARINES' HYMN

5 5 6 6 6 6 6 7 6 5 5 6 6 5 4 4 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 7 6 5 5 6 6 5 4 4

7 7 6 5 6 7 6 5 5 7 7 6 5 6 7 6 5 5 6 6 6 6 6 7 6 5 5 6 6 5 4 4

Another military favorite, dedicated to the artillery, is the "CAISSON SONG":

THE CAISSON SONG

6 5 6 6 5 6 6 5 6 6 6 5 6 5 5 6 5 4 6 5 4 4

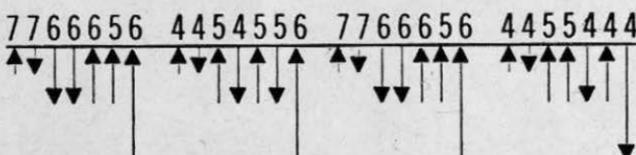
REPEAT ABOVE LINE

6 6 7 7 6 6 7 7 6 6 7 7 7 6 6 7 7 7

6 7 7 6 6 7 7 6 6 5 5 6 5 4 6 5 4 4 5 5 6 5 4 6 5 4 4

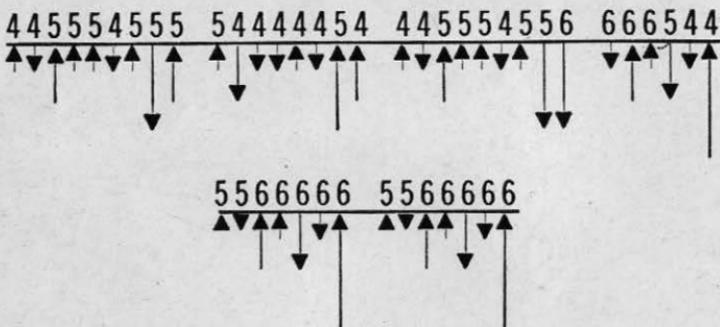
Still another is "THE WEARING OF THE GREEN," which army men call "BENNY HAVENS."

THE WEARING OF THE GREEN



The next one is most commonly sung as "For he's a jolly good fellow," but sometimes also as "We won't go home until morning" and even "The bear went over the mountain." (Originally it was a French song called "MALBROUCK," referring to the Duke of Marlborough and the battle of Blenheim, probably sung by Marie Antoinette and definitely used by Beethoven in his "Battle Symphony.")

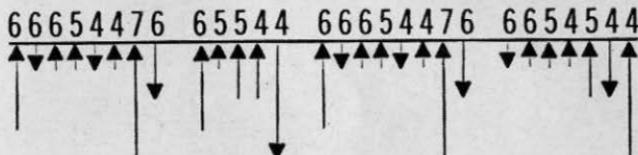
FOR HE'S A JOLLY GOOD FELLOW



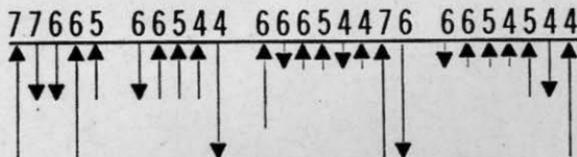
REPEAT FIRST LINE

Finally we can try some familiar Stephen Foster tunes, all within the range of an octave (8 notes) and comfortably pitched in the key of C. The easiest is "MASSA'S IN THE COLD, COLD GROUND":

MASSA'S IN THE COLD, COLD GROUND

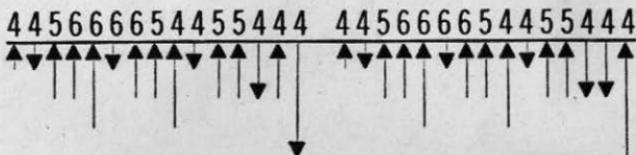


REPEAT ABOVE LINE

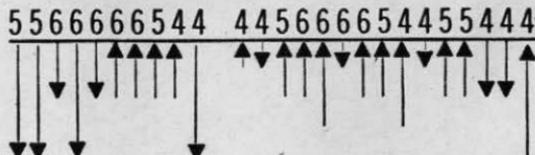


The next one is Foster's first big hit, "O SUSANNA," which takes some fast work, but should not be too hard for you by this time.

O SUSANNA

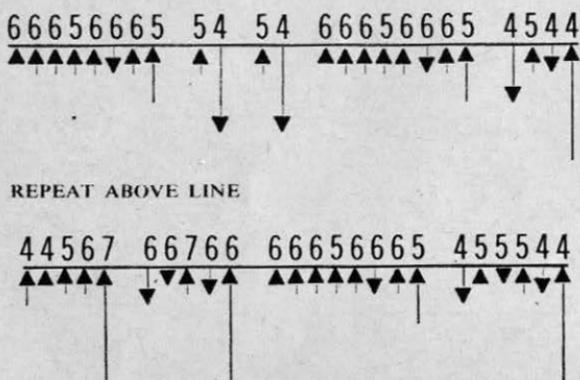


REPEAT ABOVE LINE



Another fast one by Foster is "CAMPTOWN RACES," also known as "SACRAMENTO":

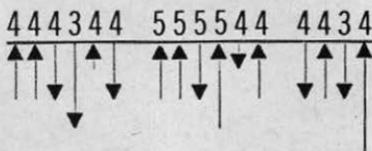
THE CAMPTOWN RACES

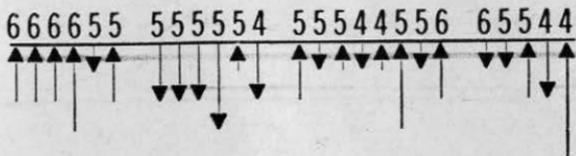


REPEAT ABOVE LINE

This makes 19 different pieces of music that you have already played on your Hohner Marine Band harmonica, all needing only the four holes in the middle of the instrument. Now let's add one or two of the lower holes, which produce the following notes: 1. Lower C, blowing in; D, drawing out; 2. E, blowing; G, drawing; 3. G, blowing; B, drawing. (See Figure 2). They will add a number of pieces to your list, besides increasing the harmony if desired. First try our patriotic air, "AMERICA," also known as England's "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN" and used by many other countries as well as schools and colleges. Here it is (with an extra B below C):

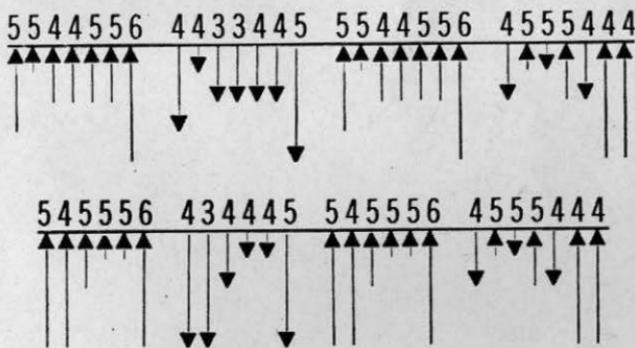
AMERICA





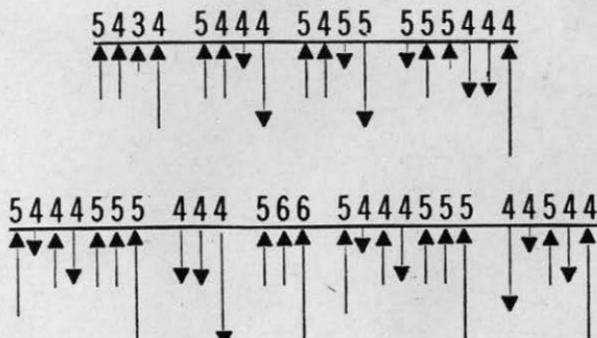
The same additional B below C appears in the American folk-song, "SKIP TO MY LOU":

SKIP TO MY LOU



Now you might also play the complete "GOOD NIGHT, LADIES" (it needs only an extra G, blowing into the third hole), adding "Merrily we roll along," which you have already played as "Mary had a little lamb":

GOOD NIGHT, LADIES



"LONG, LONG AGO" uses the lower G only twice, so it is really quite easy:

LONG, LONG AGO

REPEAT ABOVE LINE

6554335544 6554335544

4445556665 6554544

"THE FARMER IN THE DELL" has the same extra note right at the start:

THE FARMER IN THE DELL

344444 455555 666654455444

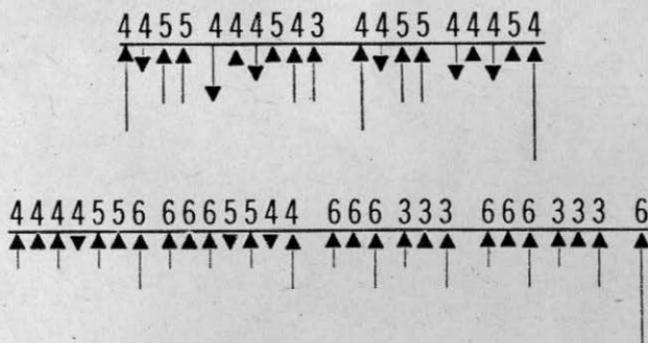
There is another familiar round, "FRERE JACQUES" (ARE YOU SLEEPING?) which adds the low G near the end:

FRERE JACQUES



The same extra note appears in the popular
"ALOUETTE":

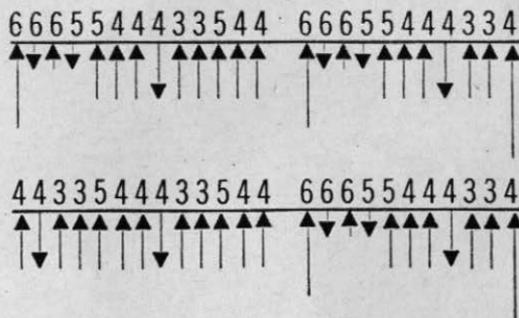
ALOUETTE



REPEAT FIRST LINE

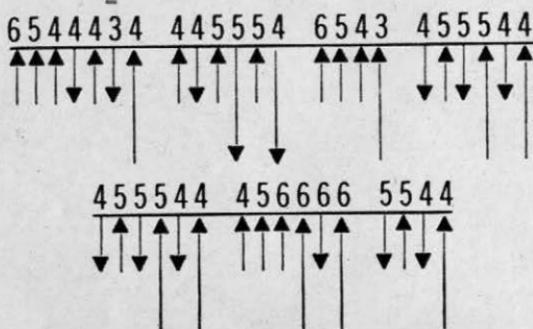
It turns up again, and a little oftener, in the German
"OH, DU LIEBER AUGUSTIN," which we generally
sing as "The more we get together."

OH, DU LIEBER AUGUSTIN



After that you might like to play one of the most popular of all hymn tunes, "COME, THOU ALMIGHTY KING." It adds both B and G below the middle C:

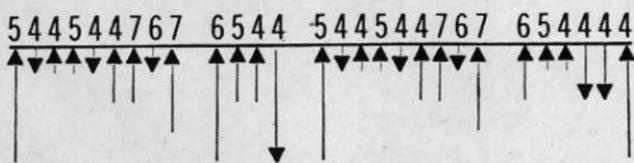
COME, THOU ALMIGHTY KING



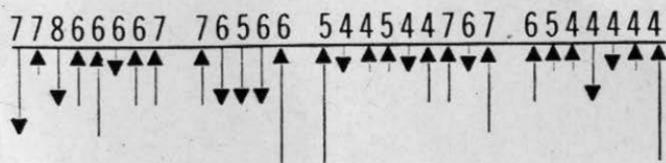
Now you can add the three upper holes in the Hohner Marine Band harmonica, which produce the following tones: Hole 8, upper D drawing out and upper E blowing in; hole 9, upper F drawing out and upper G blowing in; hole 10, upper A drawing out and high C blowing in. (See Figure 2). This permits the playing of a number of tunes that go above the octave represented by the four middle holes.

You can start with two more of the popular Foster songs, "OLD FOLKS AT HOME" (SWANEE RIVER) and "OLD BLACK JOE." Both add the upper D above C, which you get by drawing out your breath from hole 8. Here are their diagrams:

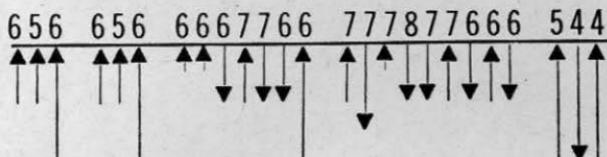
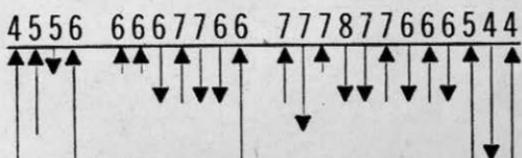
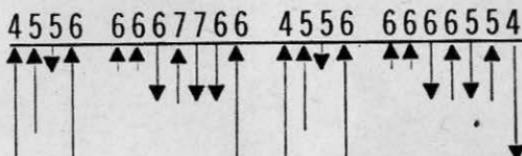
OLD FOLKS AT HOME



REPEAT ABOVE LINE

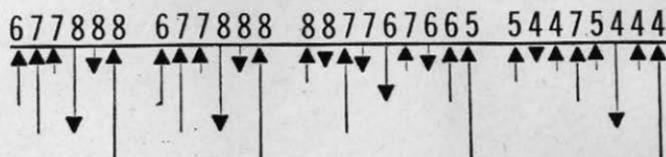


OLD BLACK JOE



The old song, "ANNIE LAURIE," needs both a D and an E above the C octave, but these extra notes occur only in the second part of the melody.

ANNIE LAURIE

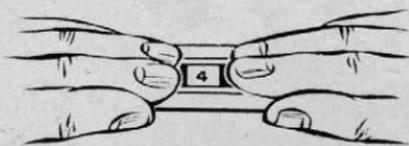


SUPPLEMENTARY INSTRUCTIONS

Now that you have enjoyed playing the tunes in this book you are ready to play *Clear Single tones* in the professional manner. Follow these instructions carefully and you will be rewarded with greatly improved harmonica playing—ready in fact after a little practice to progress to the Chromatic Harmonica:—

STEP 1.

Place your fingers over holes 3 and 5 and blow into hole No. 4, the first note of the scale, C, listen intently to the Clear sound of one note.



STEP 2.

Now you know how a single note should sound, hold your harmonica correctly (numbers showing at the top) low notes to the left and high notes to the right.

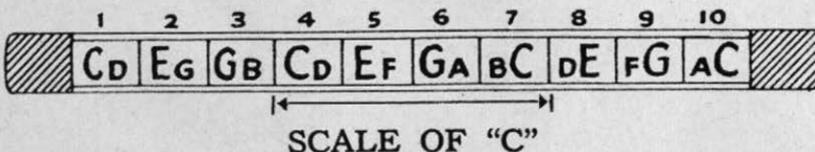


STEP 3. Try the professional Tongue Blocking method. Your lips cover 4 holes, your tongue blocks 3 holes and hole No. 4 is left open for sound.

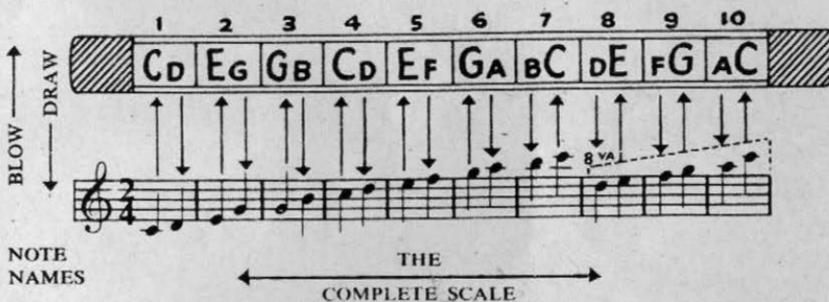


By this method every tone of the scale is obtainable as a Single Note:

STEP 4. Now turn to page 5 of this book (Fig. 2) and practice playing the scale, up and down in clear single notes. The complete range chart of your MARINE BAND harmonica is shown below. Memorize where each note is on the instrument.



Having learnt to play each note of the scale in single tones by the professional tongue blocking method, you should now study the chart shown below, use it for reference when playing new tunes—if you still need the arrows to help you, write them over the notes but dispense with them as soon as possible—try and play from the music.



To help you recognize the position of notes on the harmonica the BLOW notes are in Large type and Draw notes in small type.

Now turn to page 11 of this book to the "MARINES' HYMN", play it through and then try and play it from the music below.

The musical notation for "The Marines' Hymn" is shown in three staves. The first staff begins with a G clef and a 4/4 time signature. It features a 'REPEAT' sign with a double bar line. The second staff begins with a treble clef and a 4/4 time signature. The third staff begins with a bass clef and a 4/4 time signature. The notation consists of various note heads and stems, with some notes having dots or dashes indicating specific playing techniques.

3. From time to time (and always after playing) you should tap the harmonica several times against the palm of the hand, with the holes inverted, so that any excess saliva or foreign substances may be removed.

4. Naturally one should not play a harmonica while chewing gum or eating candy, as this may have a very bad effect on the reeds. In fact, it pays to rinse out the mouth just before playing, especially after one has eaten food of any kind.

5. Before putting it back in its case, it is advisable to dry the playing surface with a clean, soft, lint-free cloth. If you follow these simple instructions on the playing and care of your instrument we are sure that you will enjoy many hours of pleasure with your Hohner harmonica.



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